

## CLAIMS

We claim:

- 1 1. A method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient, the multi-media  
2 message being created by a sender for delivery by an animated entity, the method  
3 comprising:  
4 recording an audio message from the sender;  
5 receiving a choice of one of a plurality of animated entities to deliver the  
6 message;  
7 conforming the audio message to movements associated with the animated entity  
8 to create a multi-media message; and  
9 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient with the animated entity  
10 speaking the recorded audio message from the sender.
- 1 2. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1, further  
2 comprising:  
3 after recording the audio message from the sender, converting the audio message  
4 to a text message and presenting a text version of the audio message to the sender; and  
5 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient upon approval of the text  
6 message from the sender.
- 1 3. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,  
2 wherein the multi-media message is sent as an e-mail to the recipient.
- 1 4. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,  
2 wherein the multi-media message is sent as an instant message to the recipient.
- 1 5. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,  
2 wherein the multi-media message is sent over the Internet to the recipient.
- 1 6. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 1,  
2 wherein the multi-media message is sent to the recipient via a wireless network.

- 1 7. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using  
2 an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated  
3 entities, the method comprising:  
4 recording a sender audio message;  
5 associating the sender audio message with the animated entity to create the multi-  
6 media message; and  
7 processing the multi-media message for the recipient such that the animated  
8 entity speaks the sender audio message.
- 1 8. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein associating  
2 the sender audio message with the animated entity further comprises:  
3 using an automatic speech recognition system to convert the audio message to a  
4 text message;  
5 presenting the text message to the sender; and  
6 after receiving approval from the sender for the text message, using the text  
7 message to coordinate mouth movements for the animated entity.
- 1 9. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein the multi-  
2 media message is sent over the Internet.
- 1 10. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 7, wherein the multi-  
2 media message is sent in an instant message.
- 1 11. The method of sending a multimedia message of claim 7, wherein the multi-  
2 media message is sent over a wireless network.
- 1 12. A method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient, the multi-media  
2 message being created by a sender for delivery by an animated entity, the method  
3 comprising:  
4 receiving a text message from the sender;  
5 recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;

6 receiving a choice of one of a plurality of animated entities to deliver the  
7 message;  
8 conforming the sender audio message to movements associated with the  
9 animated entity to create a multi-media message; and  
10 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient with the animated entity  
11 speaking the recorded audio message from the sender.

1 13. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 12,  
2 further comprising:

3 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient upon approval of the sender  
4 audio message by the sender.

1 14. The method of delivering a multi-media message to a recipient of claim 12,  
2 further comprising:

3 recording the sender audio message corresponding to the text message after the  
4 sender makes a request to input an audible version of the text message.

1 15. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using  
2 an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated  
3 entities, the method comprising:

4 receiving a text message from the sender;

5 recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;

6 associating the sender audio message with the animated entity to create the multi-  
7 media message; and

8 processing the multi-media message for the recipient such that the animated  
9 entity speaks the sender audio message.

1 16. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using  
2 an animated entity, the sender choosing the animated entity from a plurality of animated  
3 entities, the method comprising:

4 receiving a text message from the sender;  
5 recording a sender audio message corresponding to the text message;  
6 conforming the audio message to movements associated with the animated entity  
7 to create a multi-media message; and  
8 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient, wherein the animated entity  
9 uses a synthesized voice having characteristics associated with the recorded sender audio  
10 message.

1 17. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient using  
2 an animated entity of claim 16, wherein the synthesized voice includes an accent of the  
3 sender voice.

1 18. A method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics, the  
2 method comprising:

3 receiving an audio recording from the sender;  
4 parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters; and  
5 using the audio parameters, synthesizing a voice that is not the sender's voice but  
6 includes at least one sender voice characteristic.

1 19. The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of  
2 claim 18, wherein the at least one sender voice characteristic is one of an accent, voice  
3 inflection, pitch, rhythm, or dialect.

1 20. The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of  
2 claim 18, further comprising, before receiving the audio recording, receiving a text  
3 version of a message associated with the audio recording.

1 21. The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of  
2 claim 18, further comprising, after receiving the audio recording, using an automatic  
3 speech recognizer and presenting a text version of the audio recording to the sender for  
4 approval before parameterizing the audio recording.

1 22. The method of providing a synthesized voice with sender voice characteristics of  
2 claim 18, wherein parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters further  
3 comprises using an alignment program for segmenting the audio recording into  
4 phonemes and labeling the audio recording with the phonemes, duration, pitch, stress  
5 and other parameters.

1 23. A method of synthesizing a non-sender voice with sender voice characteristics,  
2 the method comprising:

3 receiving a text message from the sender;  
4 receiving an audio recording from the sender associated with the text message;  
5 parameterizing the audio recording into audio parameters using segmentation;  
6 and  
7 using the audio parameters, synthesizing the non-sender voice to have sender  
8 voice characteristics.

1 24. The method of synthesizing a non-sender voice with sender voice characteristics,  
2 wherein the sender voice characteristics comprise at least one of accent, voice inflection,  
3 pitch, rhythm, or dialect.